

A STUDY ON EFFECT OF FAMILY SEPARATION ON STRESS LEVEL OF SOLDIERS DEPLOYED IN RAJASTHAN SECTOR OF INDIAN AIR FORCE

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ABSTRACT

The Armed forces operate in a dynamic environment, which present several challenges to its personnel. Soldiers are living in an idle stress breeding environment due to frequent and large number of uncertainties. The study was an attempt to identify the effects of family separation in increasing stress level among soldiers of Indian Air Force in frontier field units in Rajasthan Sector. Convenient sampling method adopted for this descriptive study with 80 as the sample size. The result shows that worries about health conditions of family members, poor interpersonal relationship, reduced performance, poor marital relationship, feeling of isolation and loneliness and worries about safety of relatives and properties are the factors which contributes towards increase of stress level among soldiers due to military induced family separation.

Key words: Deployment, Isolation, Loneliness, Military induced family separation, Marital relationship

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Scope of Study

Along with the usual stress faced by civilian families, the military personnel and their families face stress unique to military service. Some are related to deployment, including separation from family members and exposure of family members to danger of combat. The various concerns of soldiers who are at far off place and away from family are Child Education, Job/education, and Communicating with Spouse, Household Finance, Family members' health problem and Household maintenance. (Health care survey report, 2002).

The Armed Forces operate in a dynamic environment, which presents several challenges to its personnel. As the Armed Forces are becoming more and more complex in terms of technology and operations, the amount of stress faced by the personnel is also increasing. According to the Ministry of Defence, the changing scenarios in the country along with the environmental and operational commitments together have put enormous demands for adjustment on the uniformed services.

According to Col KC Dixit who carried out study on stress related issues in the Army during Feb 2011, Stress is evidenced to be one of the causative factors for lifestyle disorders such as backache, sleeplessness, hyperacidity, gas, chronic fatigue syndrome, heart disease, diabetes and even cancer. All human being undergoes stress at some point of time during their routine part of life. Stress causes a number of biological changes and is intended to activate the body's fuel reserves. The soldiers are no exception except that they are comparatively in an ideal stress breeding environment due to frequent and large number of uncertainties/ changes vis-à-vis civilian counterparts with similar service conditions.

Stress can affect an individual's decision making process and ability to make effective judgments. For example, Easterbrook (1959) proposes a "cue utilization model" and argues that when exposed to stressors, individual's experiences perceptual narrowing meaning that they pay attention to fewer perceptual cues or stimuli that could contribute to their behaviour or decision. Peripheral stimuli are likely to be the first to be screened out or ignored. Janis and Mann (1977) suggest individual may make decision on incomplete information under stress. When under stress individual may fail to consider the full range of alternatives available, ignores long-term consequences and make decision based on oversimplifying assumptions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The complex human experience of military service and the stress suffered by millions of military personnel and their family each time a loved one deploys, present unique challenges and opportunities in providing pastoral care and counselling. War and military service impact many facts of our society, as well as generational and interpersonal relationship (Moon, 2016).

Hans Selye (1936), one of the leading authorities on the concept of stress, described stress as "the rate of all wear and tear caused by life." He classified stress into positive or negative stress. Stress is good when the situation offers an opportunity to a person to gain something. It acts as a motivator for peak performance. Stress is negative when a person faces social, physical, organizational and emotional problems. The two decade old concluded Persian Gulf war focussed public attention on the problems faced by military families in coping with military induced family separation (Black, 1993). He brought out various unique stresses faced by family of soldier deployed away from family as part of active duty/ routine duties.

Issues of anticipation, separation and reunion are concerns that families face when family members are subject to military deployment (Joseph C. and Boveja, 1998). The soldiers and their families who are separated are subject to three different patterns of transformations namely settlings in immediately, struggling followed by settlings in and struggling without relief (Messenger and Kenddall, 1998).

During deployment, soldiers and their families are subject to various stresses such as worries, waiting, going it alone and pulling double duty and loneliness. Communication technology made it possible for most soldiers to stay in touch with family members using telephone, e-mail or even web cam but managing personal family and household responsibilities was the most commonly identified coping stress (Lapp and Taft, 2010).

Long separation have caused enormous stress within uniformed personal and contributing to arising military divorce rate and it is outpacing the civilian divorce rate as well as sharp increase in mental health problems. While e- mail and video chats have made it easier for couples to stay in touch, the long separation can wear down the feelings of intimacy and togetherness that keep marital bond strong (Tarant , 2010).

3. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There were as many as 635 cases of suicide including attempted suicides and 67 cases of fratricidal killings in the three services of Armed Forces during the years 2003 to 2007. These statistics also indicate that Army was worst affected by this malady in terms of number of cases of suicides and fratricides in each of the year during this period. The statistics are chilling. According to Ministry of Defence, every third day a soldier is killing himself, at a rate higher than the toll taken by the militants. From 2007 to May 2010, 208 soldiers lost their lives in actions against militants while 368 soldiers killed themselves during this period. This alarming trend of suicides and fratricidal killings in the Armed Forces during the recent past is attributable to enhanced stress environment leading to psychological imbalance in the soldiers

The 31st Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence had been informed by the Ministry of Defence that seven studies on issues related to stress management had been conducted by the Army since 2005 besides an internal study by the Indian Air Force on suicides reported during the period 2002-2007. An in-house study by Indian Navy on 'Occupational Stress in Naval Personnel' has also been conducted. As per these studies, the main causes identified among troops are changing socio-economic environment in the country and domestic problems. Till a year ago, the suicide rate was more than 100 per year

The standing committee on Defence headed by Mr. B Vikhe Patil carried out study on the stress level in Indian Armed Forces during 2008-2009 and in their report, they brought out that separation from family members and isolation are two vital stressors which puts soldiers at an increased stress level.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Objective of the Study

To identify the effects of family separation on the stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force who are deployed in various frontier units of Indian Air Force in Rajasthan Sector.

4.2. Hypothesis of the Study

H₁ H₀ . There is no significant impact of military induced family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force.

H₁- There is a significant impact of military induces family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force.

4.3. Area of the Study

The frontier field units of Indian Air Force located at Suratgarh, Nal and Bikaner in Rajasthan sector are the places where soldiers are deployed, leaving family at home are selected for the study.

4.4. Sources of Data

Primary data: Primary data has been collected from the soldiers of Indian Air Force through direct interaction and phone using structured questionnaire.

Secondary data: The secondary data collected from various sources like library books, journals, research papers, magazines, newspapers and various web sites.

Sampling technique: The study has been conducted at three frontier field units of Indian Air force located at Suratgarh, Nal and Bikaner in Rajasthan sector to identify the effects of family separation on stress level of soldiers. The convenient sampling method is adopted, which helped to interview and interact with soldiers of different field units. Followed by the pilot study, 80 Indian Air Force soldiers consisting of different age group were took part in this study.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

5.1. Data Analysis

The data analysis has been done using IBM SPSS20 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

5.2. Statistical Techniques

Descriptive Statistics: In order to identify the various factors which contributes towards increasing the stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force due to Military Induced separation owing to their deployment, the percentage analysis and frequency distribution done on the data collected?

Multiple Regressions: In order to study the effect of family separation on the soldiers and its impact on stress level amongst soldiers, the multiple linear regression analysis by linear regression analysis has been applied. The functional form of multiple linear regression models is given below.

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_i X_i + e_i$$

Where:

Y = Dependent variable Cultural diversity / communication challenges / unawareness of other culture / Conflicts due culture difference

X_i = Independent variable - diversity factors

i = 1 to n

α = Intercept

6. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Social background of Soldiers

Social background of soldiers of Indian Air Force is collected for the analysis purpose and details are listed in Table 1. The result shows that majority of the soldiers (52.8 %) are belongs to age group of 31-40 years, followed by 21-30 years (25%) and 41-50 years (17.2%). The 46.1 % of soldiers are having the experience of 10-20 years, followed by 2-10 years (31.1%) and 20-30 years (22.8). All respondents are male soldiers. It is apparent that majority (53.3%) of the soldiers have completed their UG, followed by Intermediate of 17.3%, Diploma of 15% and PG of 14.3%. The 66.2 % respondents are married and 33.8% are unmarried.

Table 1 Social background of IAF Soldiers

Age	Per (Fre.)	Exp.	Per (Fre.)
21-30	20 (25)	2-10	25 (31.1)
31-40	42(52.8)	10-20	37 (46.1)
41-50	14 (17.2)	20-30	18 (22.8)
51-56	04 (05)		
Gender		Marital Status	
Male	100	Married	5366.2
		Unmarried	2733.8
Education			
10+2	14 (17.3)		
Diploma	12 (15)		
UG	42 (53.3)		
PG	12 (14.4)		

6.2. Effects of Family Separation on Stress Level/Behaviour of Soldiers

Table 2 shows frequency and percentage value of dependent variable namely Induces High Stress level and the independent variables such as Worries about health conditions of relatives, Poor chances for Quality Child Education, Poor Interpersonal relationship, Reduced Performance of Soldiers, Feelings of Isolation and Loneliness, and Worries about safety and security of family members and properties.

Table 2 Family Separation factors that affect Stress level of Soldiers

Effect of family separation on soldier	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Separation induces higher stress level	24 (30)	49(61.2)	4 (5)	3 (3.8)	0(0)
Worries about Health conditions of Relatives	31(38.8)	42(52.4)	7(8.8)	0(0)	0(0)
Poor chances for Quality child education	24 (30)	49 61.2)	2 (2.5)	2 (2.5)	3 (3.8)
Poor Inter personnel Relationship	21 (26.2)	52 (65)	4 (5)	3(3.8)	0(0)
Reduced Performance	27(33.8)	45(56.3)	1(1.3)	2(2.5)	5(6.3)
Poor Marital Relationship	30 (37.5)	43 53.7)	2(2.5)	2 (2.5)	3(3.8)
Feeling of Isolation and Loneliness	33(41.3)	30(37.4)	8(10)	4(5)	5(6.3)
Worries about Safety of Relatives and Properties	40 (50)	33 41.2)	5 (6.3)	2 (2.5)	0 (0)

The figures in the parentheses are percentage total; primary and computed data.

The table shows that 61.2 % of the respondents agreed and 30 % are strongly agreed that family separation has induces high stress level on soldiers. The 52.4% of the soldiers agreed and 31% strongly agreed that family separation increases the worries of soldiers about health conditions of family members. The 61.2 % of the respondents agreed and 30% are strongly agreed that family separation leads to poor chances for quality education for their children. The 65% of respondents agreed and 26.2% are strongly agreed that family separations has adverse impact on inter personal relationship with others. The 56.3% of respondents agreed and 33.8% are strongly agreed that family separations has reduces their level of performance. The 53.7% of respondents agreed and 37.5% are strongly agreed that family separation leads to poor marital relationship with their spouses. The 37.4% of the respondents agreed and 41.3% are strongly agreed that family separation induces the feeling of isolation and loneliness in them. The 41.3% of respondents agreed and 50% are strongly agreed that family separation increases their worries about safety of family members and security of their properties.

6.3. Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to identify the influences of stress level impact (dependent variable) on soldiers of Indian Air force, the multiple regression analysis by linear regression carried out and results presented in Table 3.

Table 3 Influences of family Separation on stress level of soldiers- Multiple Regressions

Stress factors	Regressions Coefficient	t-value	Sig.
Family separation impact on Stress level			
Stress level increase due to Worries about Health Conditions of Family Members	.467**	4.776	.000
Stress level increase due to Poor Quality Education to Children	-.182	-1.378	.173
Stress level increase due to Poor Inter Personal Relationship	.264**	3.114	.003
Stress level increase due to Reduced Performance	-.261*	-2.117	.038
Stress level increase due to Poor Martial Relationship	.672**	5.497	.000
Stress level increase due to Isolation and Loneliness	.308**	3.914	.000
Stress level increase due to Worries about Safety of Family Members and Security of Properties	-.189*	-2.284	.025
Dependent Variable- Family Separation Induces Higher Stress Level ** Indicates significant at 1% level * Indicates significant at 5% level			

6.4. Hypothesis testing

6.4.1. Family Separation has impact on Stress level of Soldiers

H_0 There is no significant impact of military induced family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force.

H_1 There is a significant impact of military induced family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force.

Linear regression analysis was done on the independent factors that induce stress level on the soldiers due to family separation. The result shows that the coefficient of multiple determination $R^2 = 0.784$ and adjusted $R^2 = 0.764$ indicating that the regression model is good fit. It inferred that about 78.4% of the variation in dependent variable (stress level) explained by independent variable of stress level factors. The stress level increase due to worries about health conditions of family members, poor inter personal relationship, poor martial relationship, isolation and loneliness, and worries about safety of family members are statistically significant at 1% of level and these factors have predict the stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force. However, reduced performance and security of properties are statistically significant at 5% of level and these factors have predicted the stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force. However, poor quality of education to the children is not statistically significant. It did not predict stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force.

The ANOVA test to examine the stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force due to family separation, the F-value of 37.436 ($p=0.000$) indicates that the regression model is good fit between stress level of soldiers of Indian Air force and its independent variables. F value statically significant at 1% shows that, there is a significant impact of stress level on soldiers of Indian Air force. Hence, we reject null hypothesis (H_0), there is no significant impact of military induced family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force and there by accept H_1 that there is a significant impact of military induced family separation on stress level of soldiers of Indian Air Force.

7. CONCLUSION

The Military induced family separation is the most important factor which causes stress on soldiers. The analysis indicates that family separation of soldiers due to their deployment has direct impact on the stress

level of soldier, creates tension and in certain cases spoils the marital relations, reduces effectiveness of soldier and lastly results in poor health conditions of soldiers and their families. Though the military induces separation could not be eliminated altogether, its effects and number of separation would definitely brought down by well planned remedial measures and with improved friendly work environments.

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